

TOWN OF NEWLAND

7/1/2025

BOARD MEETING



ATTENDING:

MAYOR: Derek Roberts

ALDERMAN: James Johnson, Gail Haller, Christie Hughes, Kenan Foxx,
Dave Calvert

GUEST: Vanessa Angrisani, Nathan Gittner, Theresa Foxx

STAFF: Police Chief Michael Fields, Town Manager David Epley, Public Works
Supervisor Gary Lewis, Town Clerk Jessica Buchanan, Town Attorney Gerald McKinney

Mayor Roberts called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance. Alderman Foxx made a motion to approve the minutes from the May board meeting. Alderman Johnson seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. Alderman Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes from the June board meeting. Mayor Pro Tem Calvert seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. Mayor Roberts asked if there were any additions or changes to the agenda. Alderman Johnson made a motion to approve the agenda as is. Alderman Foxx seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Roberts stated that the town manager called him today, letting him know that a disgruntled veteran had come in raising Cain about some of the flags. Mayor Roberts said that he didn't do this for any reason other than that he believes the Town should have flags up from Memorial Day through Veterans Day. He said he appreciated the VFW's help for everything they did and didn't start buying these flags until the Town said they would not. Mayor Roberts said he would make it very clear to everyone, including veterans, and as a veteran himself, he could speak wholeheartedly. He said he has bought 125 flags; they are all up, and they look good. If anyone has a problem with the way a flag seems, he said he had two suggestions. You can buy a flag, drop it off at Town Hall, and let Jessica know which pole it needs to be attached to. Or simply keep your mouth shut. Mayor Pro Tem Calvert stated they put the flag that was hanging in their dining room during Hurricane Helene in front of the restaurant, and it was tattered, but it has flown ever since. Mayor Roberts said that if anyone had a request about a flag, they should feel free to get his number, and he would be more than willing to help out. However, he is not going to put up with someone coming into Town Hall and making threats towards the town manager about what the Town is going to do to fix something in a week. He said he has worked hard to make the flags look nice throughout the Town and keep them up throughout the whole summer. David said he tried to explain that to the gentleman, and as he was walking out, he said he would come and see David after the fourth.

CONSIDERATION OF LONGEVITY BONUS FOR EMPLOYEES

David said they had discussed this during their budget meeting, and he had made a slight adjustment by running it out a bit longer. To implement the bonuses into this year's budget, an expenditure of \$4,450 would be required. If the board approves the longevity bonus, David will add it in as an addendum to our current budget. Then they will need to do a budget amendment of \$4,450. Mayor Roberts asked if any of the board members had anything to add or take away from this, and everyone said they did not. Alderman Foxx thanked David for working on this. Alderman Foxx made a motion to approve the longevity bonuses to be paid to employees in November. MPT Calvert seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

PUBLIC WORK'S REPORT

Gary said Elite Fencing came and installed the new fence at Sokassa, from the gate to the corner. The Town had insurance money from the hurricane to cover the expenses for this. The original pump that was pulled out from Tweetsie after Helene had been rebuilt and installed. John came and fixed the float at the bottom of Ingles because it wasn't telling the system to pump. He rigged it to two other floats we have been running off of. Gary said there was a leak in front of Bellsouth, which has made its way to the road. Their meter had always had water in it, and he never thought anything of it because when it didn't rain, it would eventually dry up. However, today there was a puddle on the road and water was running down the side. Bobby Kavanaugh from Rural Water will be coming next Tuesday to see if they can find anything in the curb at Old Toe that remains wet continuously. Gary said he has gone around the backside, and it is wet up there, which is away from the water line, and he does not believe it is a natural spring. They have a meeting on Wednesday with Bob Taylor from DEQ to discuss how they can utilize some of the funding for water, as they aren't receiving any other responses. Mayor Roberts asked if there was something that could be done with the fence at the old park. Gary said he had not been able to get over there yet because he had been in class all week, but he would try to get the rest of it sometime next week. Mayor Roberts said he would send some of his guys and a track hoe if Gary would let him know what day works best for him. He asked if Gary had somewhere he could take the old fence, but Gary said he didn't know of anywhere and would probably have to haul it off to the dump.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Fields said his department had 359 logged activities for June, which included thirty-eight traffic stops, seven motor vehicle accidents, eight suspicious person calls, and charged one of those individuals with possession of methamphetamine, and seventeen requests to assist another agency. He sent Officer Isaacs and Officer Ruppard to a drug interdiction class, which included working with traffic stops, finding drugs, and being able to read people. The gentleman who taught the class has experience with the DEA and federal work, so he was able to teach them what to look for and what questions to ask. Chief reported receiving an email today from Firehouse Subs stating that he did not get one of the grants he applied for to receive a new vehicle. He said the grant becomes available again on the tenth, and he will reapply for it then. He sent some information off today and is looking into the radar speed signs that mount onto the poles. They have the big one that can be hauled around with a trailer; however, it is challenging to maneuver it to the side of the road, out of everyone's way. Chief said he was getting some quotes and looking to apply for some grants, and hopefully getting three of the radars, one for each main entrance coming into Town.

FINANCE AND MANAGER REPORT

David asked the board to approve budget amendment number one, totaling \$4,450, for the longevity bonuses for the employees. Alderman Foxx made a motion to amend the budget \$4,450 for the longevity bonuses. Alderman Hughes seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye. David said the bonuses would be incorporated into the Town personnel policy as well. David said he wanted everybody to see everything that has been done with the FEMA funding so far, and he would have a more detailed report to present in August. He would show what we have applied for, which funds we have received, and what we have left to be obligated. He mentioned that FEMA supplemental funding is available through the Department of Water and Infrastructure, and we have applied for nearly \$6 million through this program. They are looking at replacing 3,000 feet of water main from CVS to Maple's Corner, which will cost close to \$1.5 million. The replacement of the water storage tank number one will cost \$1.25 million. The construction of a new municipal well will cost \$1.5 million, and the installation of on-site emergency generators at all four well sites will be about \$600,000. The purchase of a portable 500-gallon fuel storage tank is \$10,000, and the construction of a new 100,000-gallon above-ground storage tank is approximately \$1 million. David mentioned that the Department of Commerce and Infrastructure will also be making funds available, and we can apply for up to \$5 million. Those applications will open in mid-August, and the funds will be used for road improvements, storm drains, and similar projects. He said he was in the process of trying to obtain some parks and recreation trust fund grants to do some improvements to the Town's current parks. David also recognized Melisa from the Tag office for receiving an award from the State for excellent customer service.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Nathan Gittner asked if there were any updates on the two applications that had been received for the Tourism Development Authority. Jessica said she had the applications, and Susan Johnson was interested in applying as well. Mayor Roberts asked if we were waiting for another person to apply. Jessica said she found the email, which states that the volunteer group shall consist of five members. Two members shall be individuals who are affiliated with businesses that collect the tax in the Town, and three members shall be individuals who are currently active in the promotion of travel and tourism in the Town. Mr. Gittner said he thought it was three, and he had brought a third person who was on the board at the history center. He asked if the Airbnb rentals in Town were paying the occupancy tax. Jessica reiterated she had sent the forms to all of them; however, she is not receiving the taxes from all of them. Mayor Roberts asked who enforces this, and Alderman Johnson pointed at the town manager. Mr. Gittner said if the Town was going to put the tax in place, please don't tax him and not everyone else because he is losing revenue. He said people are calling him, saying other Airbnb hosts are not paying. Mayor Roberts said David would get it taken care of. David asked Mr. Gittner if he knew which Airbnb it was. Mr. Gittner said he asked them if they were Newland Airbnbs, and they told him they had a Newland address. He wasn't sure if they were within the Town limits or the County; however, both are subject to the tax, and it is not being enforced. Mayor Roberts asked, "How do we know which Airbnbs are not paying?" Mr. Gittner said we could call the online booking sites and tell them we are collecting the occupancy tax; they needed to collect it and send it directly to us. He asked what the resolution said for the TDA, and Jessica said she would find it tomorrow so he could pick up a copy. He said he thought it recommended five, but they would do it with three.

Vanessa Angrisani inquired about the travel trailer at Scott Rhodes Auto Group and the trailer at the trailer park, which now includes dog boarding and garbage drop-off. Mayor Roberts said it was not an excuse but an explanation and believed David's 'honeymoon' was over. He asked David if he wanted to ride around with him tomorrow so he could show him all of the campers. Then the ordinance officer with the police department can go out and give the individuals a forty-eight-hour warning. If no action is taken, then we can tow it out. Mayor Roberts asked about the camper at the top of Banner Hill near the entrance of Blue Haven. Chief Fields said it was getting ready to be gone, and David said John Blackburn offered to purchase it because the individual who was living in it had passed away.

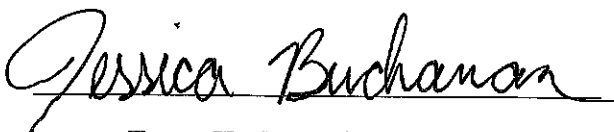
COUNCIL COMMENTS

No council comments.

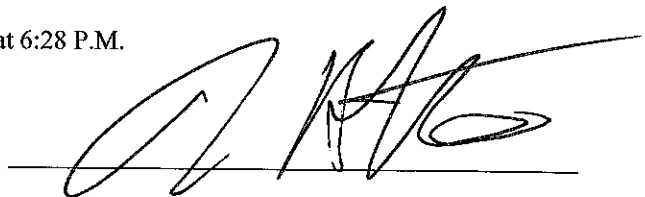
ADJOURNMENT

Alderman Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Alderman Foxx seconded the motion. All agreed by a show of hands and stating aye.

Meeting adjourned at 6:28 P.M.



Town Clerk, Jessica Buchanan



Mayor, Derek Roberts